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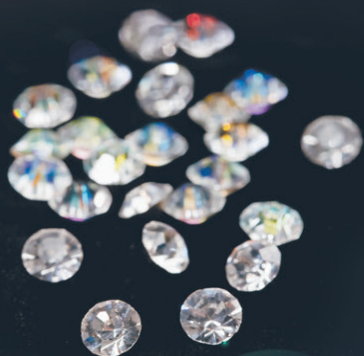
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See story on page 6



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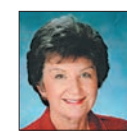
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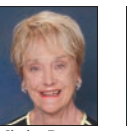
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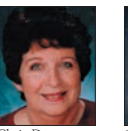
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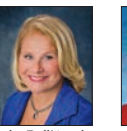
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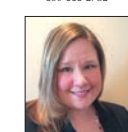
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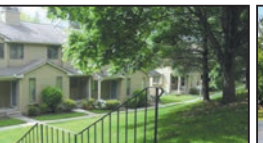
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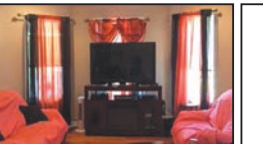
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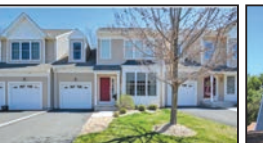
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Wethersfield LIFE

August 2016

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

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-Caitlin Cunningham

See story page 39

ON THE COVER

Author and blogger Melanie Cherniack is inspired to write from her childhood experiences and from being the mother of two adult daughters.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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Art is his life

Nick Frasco talks about the magic of turning concepts into visual creations

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Nick Frasco is an artist. He also teaches art. It's a passion he has carried with him his entire life.

The Wethersfield resident teaches art to several grades at Kinsella Magnet School in Hartford. He's also an instructor at the Wethersfield Academy for the Arts. Art was not always his career.

"Six years ago, I made the switch from cooking to teaching. I was a chef at the Marriott. I've been drawing and painting my whole life," he said.

Nick Frasco has done his take on the well-known scarecrow from "The Wizard of Oz."



Photo by Mark Jahne

Nick Frasco is an art teacher at Kinsella Magnet School in Hartford. He's also an instructor at the Wethersfield Academy for the Arts.



Courtesy photos

“I like surrealism, stuff that you dream about.”

Nick Frasco

“I like surrealism, stuff that you dream about,” he added. “A lot of stuff I make up as I’m going along.”

He recently had an exhibit at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center. Frasco teaches youth classes in drawing and painting at the arts academy on Hartford Avenue.

“I have 11 students. I help them run the summer youth program, too,” he said.

He’s also presenting a new adult class on Wednesday nights called Wildlife in Colored Pencils.

Frasco was commissioned to paint a multi-panel mural at Kinsella.

“They wanted me to do a tree of knowledge, so the mural is actually in two parts,” he said. “I did the backdrop without any spray. I did it old school.”

It features such famous people as Bob Marley, Harriet Tubman, Stephen Hawking, Salvador Dali, Charles Lindbergh and John F. Kennedy.

The branches of the tree of knowledge represent the nerves and membranes and connect to a brain.

It took seven months to complete.

Those who study a Frasco painting will almost always find a praying mantis or two somewhere in the work. They may be obvious or carefully hidden.

“I love working with the kids,” he said,

“If parents want their child to learn a drawing/painting skill set to follow their interests, Nick is the instructor who will provide that,” Betty Standish, president of the arts academy, said.

“He is a favorite instructor with many of our younger students and he is offering an adult class as well now. We are very pleased to have this accomplished artist in our roster,” she said.

Frasco has extensive experience teaching the fundamentals of drawing and painting. He earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and diploma certificate in illustration from Paier College of Art. He also earned a degree from the College of Urbino in Italy. **WL**

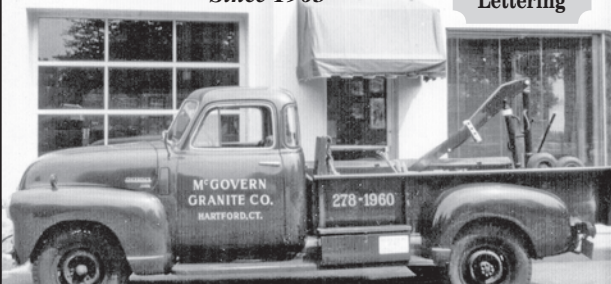
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A portion of the mural he painted for Kinsella Magnet School in Hartford shows a man reaching for a brain. The boy in the center of the circle is modeled after Frasco’s son.

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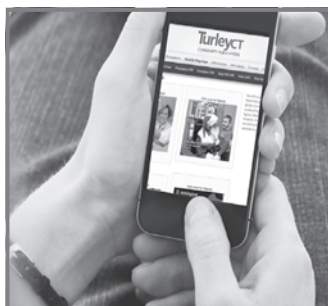
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Melanie Cherniack is a blogger and an author

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Despite her multiple books and two blogs, Melanie Cherniack still hesitates to call herself a writer.

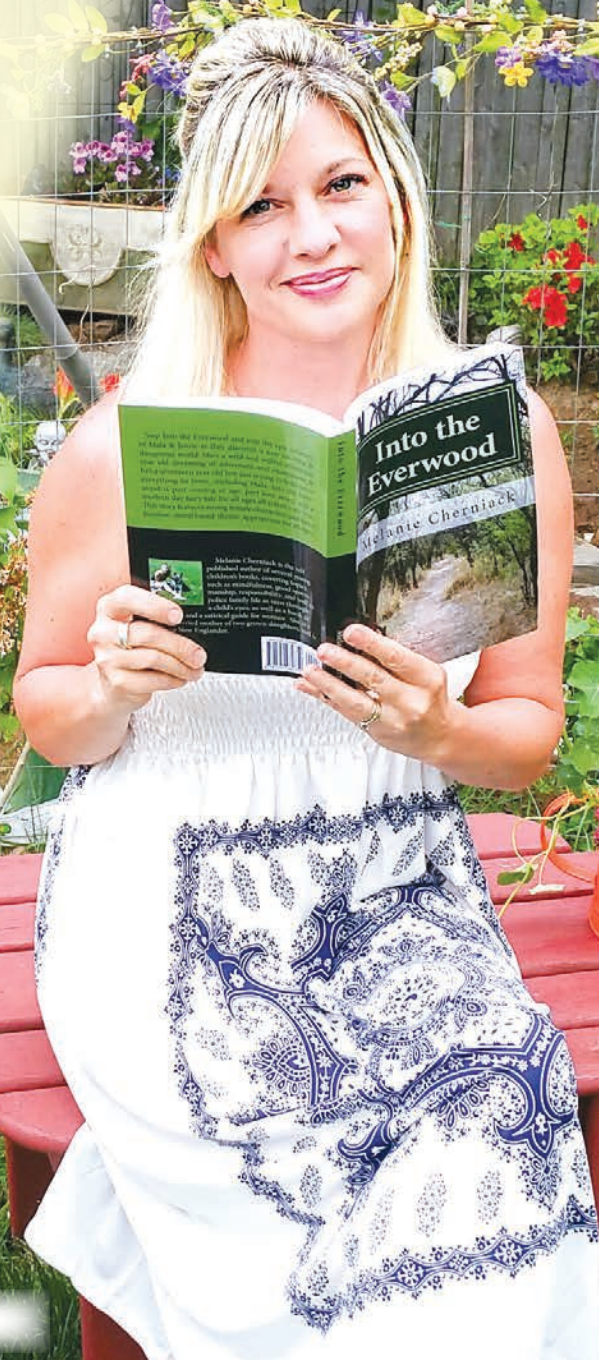
After raising two daughters as a stay-at-home mother who sometimes worked in floral design, the Rocky Hill native is finding her voice.

She has two blogs. The first, under the name "Modern Melly," explores such topics as parenting, marriage, current topics and being a police wife. Married to long-time

police officer Paul, she also has a second website, "My Blue Family Magazine Online," which is for and by police families, with news and stories that affect the law enforcement community.

"I was pretty much a classic introvert. I always had my nose in a book. [I enjoyed] anything creative: writing, drawing, art, any of that stuff," Cherniack said.

"I was a marginal student at best. The one area I always



Melanie Cherniack has written a number of books for children and adults.

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excelled in was English. When I was a kid, I'd write little stories all the time. I wouldn't even show them to anyone. I'd say, 'I'd love to write a book one day. I'd love to write a book one day.' After I got divorced, I really started thinking there's no reason not to do it," she added.

"Self-publishing makes it so easy, so accessible and budget friendly. I have a history of starting things and not finishing them. This was a goal I needed to prove to myself I can finish something."

Cherniack, who now lives in Wethersfield, decided to start with a children's book that she self-published.

"It's print-on-demand. I like that. I didn't want to buy a whole bunch of my own books and watch them collect dust. I had friends who said, 'This is great. You have to go to a publisher in this.' The fact of the matter is the children's book market is completely saturated," she said.

"They won't look at an unknown author unless your name is Jimmy Fallon. There are 32 million books on Amazon. It's hard for a publisher to

look at an unknown [author]," she added.

Despite her lack of experience, Cherniack quickly got into the swing of things.

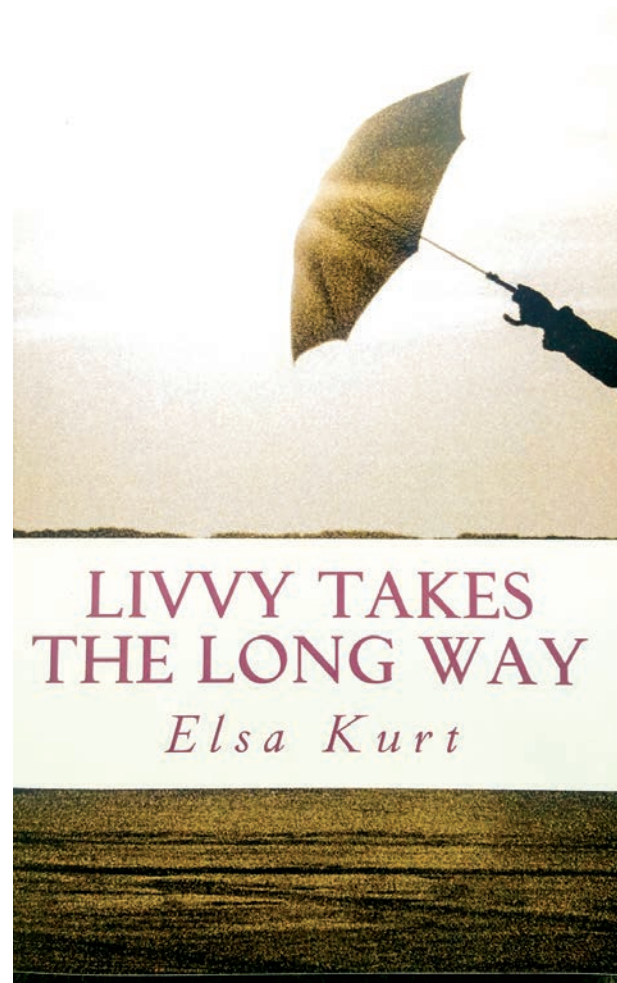
"The children's books, the first one was literally the easiest. It seems like everything I write starts with a sentence in my head. I wake up with it in the morning and it starts from there. It's almost tunnel vision; it's surprisingly simple," she said.

Her first book was "Look Outside Your Window."

"It has big large print and bold pictures. 'Look outside your window; tell me what you see.' I was a day-dreamer. My bed was turned to the window. That's where the memory came from. It became the book," she said.

In addition to writing, she also illustrated the book.

"That's terrifying when you're not really an artist. At some point I would like to revisit them and rerelease them. In just the couple of years I've been doing this, I've learned so much more," Cherniack said.



Author Melanie Cherniack wrote "Livy Takes The Long Way" under the pen name Elsa Kurt.

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Melanie Cherniack started blogging to show support for her husband Paul, a police officer.

She's written several children's books. One, "Ella and Her Rainbrella," was inspired by a girl she knows.

"I was actually inspired by a little girl I take care of. Instead of saying umbrella, she would say 'rainbrella.' She was walking in the house saying, 'I'm walking with my rainbrella.' I said that's a story," Cherniack recalled.

Despite writing several more children's books, she still felt as though she needed to do more, so in December 2015 she self-published "Into the Everwood," a coming-of-age, modern-day fairy tale.

"It was, first of all, a self-confidence thing. My husband is very encouraging. He said, 'Just do it.' I had this idea in my head, the frame of a story I knew I wanted to tell, but the concept of writing a novel, a full book with pages and pages of words that made sense was daunting," she said.

"I literally sat down on a rainy Sunday morning. I had a sentence in my head and I think I was writing until almost 8 o'clock at night. I had the thought that I wasn't going to look at it, I wasn't going to read it until it was done. I just wrote it straight through, like 394 pages. It was over several months, about six months.

"I had to force myself to sit down and commit to spending the time focused and writing. It told itself. I had no idea where the story was going until it got there. It was fun and terrifying and exhilarating," Cherniack said.

Local readers will be able to identify disguised landmarks, such as the fictional Rocky Knoll, in the book.

"This is the setting I know, this is the atmosphere I know, these are the dreams I had as a child," she said of modeling the town after Rocky Hill.

"It's a central location where everything goes from. Everyone is loosely based on a compilation of people. I pay homage to my high school English teacher. Mr. [William] McMahon was one of the best teachers I had. He was so influential."

In April of 2016, she published her second novel, "Livvy Takes the Long Way," which is a women's contemporary work of fiction, under the pen name Elsa Kurt, her grandparents' first names.

"I always loved my grandmother's name. I loved the way my grandfather said my grandmother's name. I feel like they're keeping an eye on me. Every time right before I publish, I have a dream about them," she said.

"That's the tipoff, that it's OK to do it. That's my clue. They were massively influential in my life. I wanted to pay a tribute to them."

While her books aren't autobiographical, Cherniack said they're still revealing.

"It's so exposing in a way. It's not my life, it's not my story, but there are certainly factions that resemble events in my life. You're giving people such a window into yourself. So I struggled with releasing that," she said.

"I asked the universe, if this is something to put out there, you have to give me a sign. It took several months before I got the sign I asked for. I specifically asked for a red dragonfly because I thought it would be a weird request.

"I was reading a children's story,

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and on the last page, there was a bright red dragonfly. I went OK, I'm taking it. I'm big on looking for signs and going with that the rest take care of itself."

She's now working on a sequel to "Into the Everwood."

"I have always known Melanie to be very creative. She is a wonderful artist and can paint beautiful paintings. She is amazing with flower arrangement, too. She can really make anything pretty. As a writer, she shows such talent," Jennifer Petrozza of Newington said.

"I love reading her blogs. She can be funny and serious in her writing, and puts love in everything she creates. She puts a piece of her heart and soul in all of her work."

The two have known each other for 15 years since their children were in elementary school together.

"My favorite book, even though I love them all, would have to be 'Livvy Takes the Long Way.' I think women can relate to the story. It is so well-written. It seems very real and honest. Melanie is a truly gifted, wonderful woman and I can't wait to

"When I can't say something, I can write it. There's a release in that."

Melanie Cherniack

read her next piece of work," Petrozza said.

In addition to working on her books, Cherniack continues to blog regularly. She originally started that because of her husband's profession.

"His devotion and commitment to what he does made me very defensive and protective not only of him, but of police in general. When you're on a different side of it, when you know the people and know their heart, I wanted to be an advocate for them," she said.

"That was some of the early blogging work. I wanted people to understand these are human beings with families and hearts and children who took on this job to help people and be a part of something greater than themselves. I think I

wanted to add my voice to it," she added.

From there, the blog took off.

"Then I got a big mouth. I had something to say about everything," she joked.

"It's incredibly varied. It's kind of whatever strikes me. One of the recurring themes is about young women and girls. I think about how I was just a little tight little ball of anxiety. I don't want anyone to feel that, the self-doubt, the self-consciousness I grew up with."

She usually blogs each week, sometimes sharing posts she's read. In addition to writing, she's also trying to promote her works, such as a reading at the Cora J. Belden Library in Rocky Hill.

"That's the hardest part, partic-

ularly as an introvert. I was able to read my book to the kids and that was terrifying and great. It was a really nice experience," Cherniack said.

She's active on social media.

"Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, whatever it is, I'm probably doing it."

She wants to use her books to express herself and also to bring people together.

"I'm a terrible speaker. I get tongue-tied. I'm uncomfortable. Something happens when I put things to print. I become more articulate, more witty, more confident. When I can't say something, I can write it. There's a release in that," she said.

"We have all these common things. I don't know if I realized before I was writing how much we have in common. Being relatable is a big deal to me. Embrace the imperfections of life. All the false starts and mistakes and stumbles are so relatable." **WL**

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1.) At least 200 people turned out at the Pitkin Community Center the evening of June 17 for a fundraising pasta dinner to support Jack Casey, the son of Jack and Gina Casey of Wethersfield. The younger Jack is battling a brain tumor. 2.) The kitchen was a busy place as cooks kept the supply of pasta, salad and meatballs moving. 3.) Helping out on the food line were, from left, aunt Franca Casey, Chris D'Angelo and uncle Tim Casey. 4.) These T-shirts worn by volunteer workers expressed the sentiment of the evening. The Casey family is working in conjunction with a local nonprofit organization named Amy's Angels. 5.) Volunteers served the food as those who attended waited patiently in line.



Photos by Mark Jahne

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Rolling along

Bocce league meets weekly at Mill Woods Park

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It's a game almost anyone can play. If you can roll a ball, you can play bocce.

Of course, there is a certain level of skill and strategy involved for those who want to play it well. Bocce enthusiasts of all ages gather every Thursday evening throughout the summer, beginning in June, at Mill Woods Park for friendly competition and a night out with friends.

Half a dozen or so teams come to the park each week, and substitutes are available if someone is absent. There is an air of conviviality as they encourage one another.

The Mill Woods courts were built in 2006 and funded by a grant from Wethersfield UNICO. They are located near the Loretta's Dream pavilion.

Louis Szymkowicz and Nancy Malinguaggio are part of a team called The Six Amigos. They find bocce to be an enjoyable pastime.

"My husband belongs to UNICO. It's a fun way to come out and get a little fresh air,"

Malinguaggio said.

"It's just a fun thing to come out and do it," Szymkowicz added.

Their team includes a pair of players who met in college 40 years ago and have been friends ever since.

Susan Morgan is a member of the Strikers and is having a wonderful time.

"This is my first season," she said.

Her family is in the process of moving to town and she saw bocce as a nice way to start meeting people and getting to know the area. Teammate Sarah Marino is another rookie. She enjoys the game and the camaraderie.

"I've lived in Wethersfield my whole life. It's really fun. The people are really nice," she said.

She wanted to become more involved in her community and found bocce as a way to achieve that goal.

Paul Zaino began using the courts almost as soon as they were constructed and said the league started six or seven years ago. He is a member of the Tuscan Terriers.



Cathy Forker lines up her shot on a recent Thursday night.

Photos by Lisa Brisson

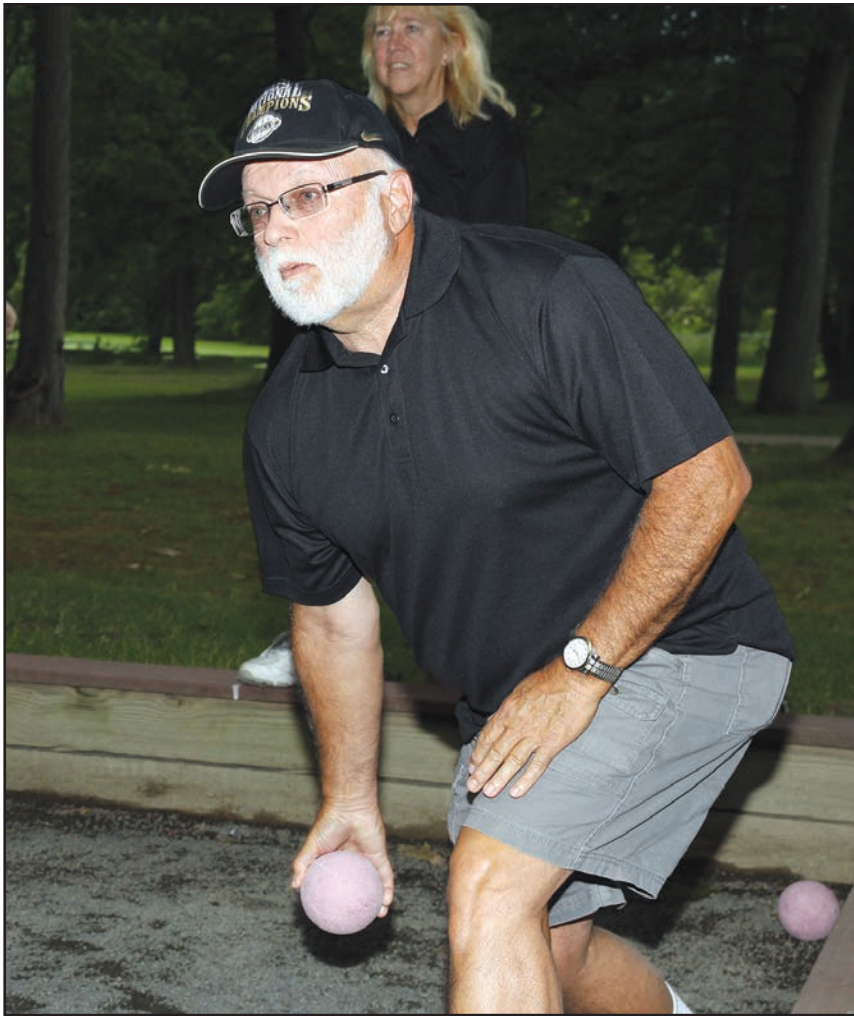
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Louis Szymkowicz takes his turn.

“We play over here every week. We get together with the Italian people. Everybody’s welcome to play with us.”

Paul Zaino

“We play over here every week. We get together with the Italian people. Everybody’s welcome to play with us,” he said.

“It’s fun,” added Dominic DeFeo. “I started playing bocce when I came to the United States.”

He pointed out that the emphasis is on having fun. The only money involved is a small sum everyone contributes to fund a party at the end of the season.

Bocce can be played on grass or on specially constructed courts like those at Mill Woods. It features a small white ball called a pallina and is played on a long, rectangular court. The pallina must be tossed at least halfway down the court for the action to begin.

Players from two teams then

toss larger colored balls toward the pallina with the goal of finishing closest to that target to score points. Part of the strategy is knocking the other team’s balls or the pallina out of the way.

After both teams have thrown all of their balls, the frame is over and points are awarded.

According to the World Bocce League, a painting discovered in Egypt dating from 5200 B.C. shows boys playing a game that strongly resembles bocce. Over the centuries, the game made its way through the Middle East and Europe and really took root in Italy.

Italian immigrants brought it to America, and WBL estimates that millions of people play it at some level throughout the country. **WL**



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A large crowd attended the brunch.



The guest of honor cuts the cake.

Courtesy photos

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Creating comedy

Actor, writer, director continues to make people laugh

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

By day, Matt Saccullo is an underwriter for an insurance company. Off the clock, however, he's been a nerdy high school pupil, a standard magician and even a wheezy Darth Vader.

A relatively new resident of Wethersfield, he spends much of his free time working as an actor, writer, director and producer of comedic sketch and improvised shows.

The love of creating these kinds of productions began humbly for Saccullo, in a high school classroom in Wallingford.

"It was my junior year and we had the opportunity to either write a paper or do a video for English class," he recalled. "Of course, I chose to do

the video."

Despite not having any previous experience with script writing, directing or filming in general, he and his classmate created a video that incorporated themes from novels they had read in class, such as "Beowulf" and "King Arthur," as well as inside jokes for their classmates.

"They were all rather terrible," he said with a laugh. "But that first video, and seeing people's reactions to it, was that first epiphany. That was the first time I felt that euphoric feeling of a reaction."

Saccullo went to Central Connecticut State University to study theater. Despite his propensity for wanting to make people laugh, the school's program focused pri-



Photos courtesy of Matt Saccullo

Wethersfield resident Matt Saccullo addressed the crowd at the Carriage House Theater in Hartford during his Disney-themed sketch show. An actor, writer, director and producer, he has been bringing his unique brand of comedy to audiences for years.

marily on dramatic theater.

"They were very good about letting you do whatever you wanted, though," he said.

By his sophomore year, he wanted to take on more of the creative process when he wrote and directed his first show, a comedy that was a

tribute to the work of Abbott and Costello.

"I remember my dad showing them to me when I was a kid and loving it and I thought, this is what's good," he said.

Throughout his years in college, Saccullo continued to write, direct

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and produce shows and videos, forming a group with two of his friends called Knuckle Sandwich Productions.

He moved to New York City after college with one of his teammates to pursue his passion at the next level. His first step was to try out for an established team creating sketch comedy.

"It was my first audition in New York and I got it," Saccullo recalled. "Then we got agents in New York and it just started going from there."

Opportunities as a writer and performer started to arise. A friend from an acting school reached out and said that students at his school wanted to enter a film festival in France, but needed a script. They asked Saccullo if he would come aboard as a writer.

He sent over a script about an art school and was quickly asked to play an even larger role in the film's production, first as a writer, then as an actor and finally as director.

"He came to me again and I was like, I don't know how to direct and he said, 'you'll figure it out,'" Saccullo

said, shaking his head. "I said, alright, I guess we're going to make Knuckle Sandwich a little bigger."

It was one of his first big chances but did not end up being a breakthrough production.

"It was terrible," he said. "It was way too long and way too bad. Even during filming, we had to pay a janitor to let us in for an hourly rate."

From there, he began creating more content, sharing creative control with his fellow members of Knuckle Sandwich. His next film was a mix of sketch, improvised comedy and what he called invisible theater, a theatrical performance where one wouldn't typically expect a theatrical performance.

"It was called 'Matt and Nick's Reality Show' and I still think it has some of the funniest sketches I've written in there," Saccullo said.

One bit in particular had him dressing up as the fictional Peter Angel, the imagined brother of real-life illusionist Criss Angel, and walking up to strangers in Central Park to poorly attempt magic.

Saccullo was accepted into the

Screen Actors' Guild and began acting as an extra on shows such as "The Bedford Diaries" and "Life On Mars," where he was a featured performer. He then booked a role as an extra in the big-budget blockbuster film "Spiderman 3."

With his career seeming ready to take off, he began looking at his life and reevaluating if this kind of work was truly what made him happy.

"I remember being on set like, this is terrible," he recalled. "I didn't enjoy being in a green room for four hours and on set for 15 minutes."

He was engaged to his future wife Shana and the two were starting to think more about settling down. The chaotic lifestyle that came with being a working actor in New York was no longer ideal.

"It was very cool experiences and it definitely helped shape everything," Saccullo said.

They moved back to Connecticut under the impression that he would start teaching improv in the area and continue with personal creative projects.

Saccullo decided to take an advanced class at Playhouse on Park in West Hartford with instructor Claire Zick, an improv teacher and performer who was looking to cast a new show she had coming up.

"She mentioned to me she was having auditions for this '80s teen movie show, so I went," he said.

The show featured a small cast of improvisers working together to create a John Hughes-style live movie with all of the characters, plot and dialogue made up on the spot.

"He hadn't done a long-form narrative show like that before, in fact nobody out here really had. It's a very different kind of style that's more prevalent on the West Coast," Zick said.

"Because he's a writer and he's written his own movies, he really picked up the story-based element and the narrative components of it very quickly."

It was during this show that Saccullo began to meet more people in the improv community in Connecticut, something he didn't think existed outside of large cities

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"We clicked right away," fellow improviser Kevin McDermott said. "Our sensibilities and comedic instincts are in concert with one another."

Instead of stepping into a teaching role, Saccullo found he would rather perform with this group of people, many of whom were around his same experience level. Along with Zick and McDermott, he formed a small improv troupe called Franklin's Peaches that performs around the Hartford area.

He kept writing his own shows and utilizing spaces in Connecticut to perform them. His first show after returning to the state was a comedic piece he wrote called "American History 101: From Columbus to Obama."

Saccullo recalled that this first production had a bit of a rocky start. He rented a theater space in New Britain and didn't realize that it was being shared with another show at the time.

"We came in one night and did a show, and we came in the next night and there was a set built on the stage," he said.

After that show roughly five years ago, Saccullo continued to work on new projects, including a Disney-themed sketch show inspired by the fairytale stories he would read to his son Ben, now 4. Following that production, he created a "Star Wars" themed show that looked at the movies from the viewpoint of two kind but inept storm troopers.

For each of these shows, his original vision was smaller than the eventual production. As he writes, he typically will write double the length of what will be in the finished product and give it to the actors he would like in the show for feedback on where to cut. But the shows often still run long.

"American History, I cut sketches, it was still long. Disney, I cut sketches, it was still long. Star Wars, I cut about 120 pages," he said of the show that stretched for nearly three hours.

Because there are often changes made to scripts, he only casts improvisers in his shows because they have the ability to go slightly off script without derailing the plot.

"He comes in as a writer with a lot of material, but he works mostly with improvisers, so he is actively seeking their input throughout," Zick said. "He's truly interested in being open and getting input from others who are in the show."

That ability to accept feedback and make changes to his work is what those who have worked with him said sets him apart from other writers and directors.

"He said the entire time, this is a collaborative team effort, so please offer your thoughts," McDermott said. "Some directors might say that and not mean it. Matt said it and wholeheartedly meant it."

"He has a really clear artistic vision for his shows, but he wants a lot of feedback and he wants people to contribute their ideas," Julia Pistell said.

She is a fellow improviser and managing director of the Sea Tea Comedy Theater in Hartford.

"He wants people who are really smart and really creative and will challenge him artistically. He's not afraid to say no to any changes, but he always wants to hear any idea. I think it's wonderful that the community has really embraced his work and given him the space to put on his shows," she added.

Saccullo was most recently in a revival of the '80s teen movie show that introduced him to Connecticut's creative community. As one of seven cast members, who once again include both McDermott and Zick, who is directing the show, he entertained audiences with a completely improvised live movie Memorial Day Weekend at Playhouse on Park.

Saccullo said that although he loves creating and performing in these shows, his priorities lie firmly with being a good husband to Shana and father to Ben, 4, and Milo, 1. **WL**



Matt Saccullo formed a production company with his friends during his college years called Knuckle Sandwich Productions. It went on to create a variety of sketch and improvisational comedy movies.



Not one to shy away from making audiences laugh, Matt Saccullo wrote and performed in a comedic sketch where he played the fictional Peter Angel, imaginary brother of real illusionist Criss Angel, and he approached strangers in Central Park to attempt poorly executed magic tricks.

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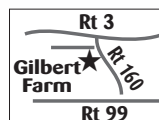
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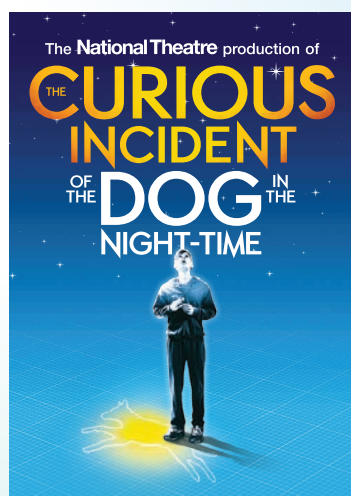
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These athletes are tops

WHS outdoor track team wins its first-ever State Open

by Mark Jahne
Editor

When Wethersfield LIFE wrote about Wethersfield High School track and field in its May issue, the boys indoor team had just captured the Class L championship. They had never done that before.

Then the weather warmed up and outdoor track and field season began. That ended in unprecedented success for the Eagles.

"We had a pretty good darn year. We won the CCC South [conference], we won the Class L state championship and we won the State Open," Coach Jeff Weber said.

It was the fifth Class L title for the outdoor team and its first state title in his 18 years with the squad. The State Open, held this year in New Britain, brings together the top teams from high schools of all sizes across the state, so the hometown team had to compete against schools with a much larger student population and, presumably, a larger talent pool.

Larger, but not better. It wasn't even close. Wethersfield scored points in all of the different events and, when they were added up, the margin of victory was downright comfortable.

"Winning the State Open was the biggest deal. It was such a team-oriented accomplishment," Weber said. "We won pretty handily."

Outdoor track and field championships consist of various sprints and relays, various jumps (triple, high and long), javelin and the shot put. Winning or finishing high in each event is the secret to accumulating enough points to win the trophy.

The Eagles placed first in the 400-meter race and javelin, second in the 4-by-100 relay and among the top three in all of the jumping events.

Several members excelled in their respective events. Elijah Young finished first in the 200 meters, 400 meters and 4-by-100 relay. Other top runners were Pat Hurley in the 200 meter and 4-by-100; Jae-quan Brown in the 100 meter, 200 meter and 4-by-



The Wethersfield High School boys outdoor track team ran off an unprecedented winning streak that ended with it winning the State Open championship as the top scholastic track team in all of Connecticut.

100; Lorenzo Burgos in the 4-by-100; Troy Stegman in the 800 meter, 4-by-400 and 4-by-800 relays.

Richard Williams was first in javelin, Nick Cusano was first in Class L shot put and discus, and Julian Campbell took second-place honors in the high jump, long jump and triple jump. Other significant contributors were Griffin Grabowski, Brian Heavren, Kyle Klavins, Stevensen Paul, Dan Schroeder and Arben Zoto.

The team had been building in strength for the past few years and Weber said this was the season to make its move to the top. Confidence was high. Most of the squad consisted of graduating seniors so, while there is still some talent remaining, next year's team is not expected to be

as powerful.

"We were so well rounded as a team this year," he said.

He added that the seniors will be hard to replace because they, both individually and collectively, had so much talent.

To top it all off, seven WHS male athletes competed in the national high school track and field championships in North Carolina. They didn't win the whole thing, but did place first in the country in the 800-meter sprint medley relay.

Runners and javelin throwers qualified to participate in this event.

"We knew we had the personnel who could do pretty well in that event," Weber said. "We have one of the top 400 medley runners in New England in Elijah Young." **WL**

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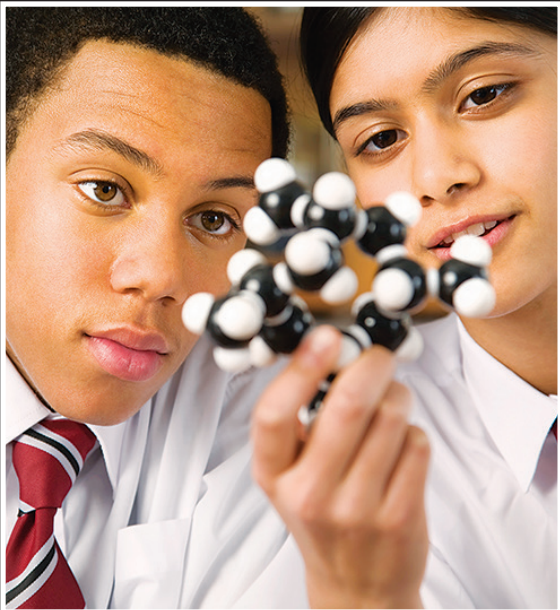
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BACK TO

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SCHOOL

August 2016



A unique offering

Area high school courses go beyond math and history

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

There are classes offered and taken at nearly every high school in the country – English, history, science, and algebra...but with a diversifying student population, many schools, including schools throughout Connecticut, are tak-

ing the opportunity to offer a variety of unique courses.

At Hall High School in West Hartford, many of those core subjects now have specialized classes for upperclassmen to explore.

"In our English classes, we are offering women's literature, with one course called 'Breaking the

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Back to School

Silence,' which is classical feminist, and one that's new this year called 'Redefining the Roles,' which provides an evolutionary study of the roles of women in society," Hall High School Assistant Principal John Guidry said. "We also offer history of modern Warfare, which many students really adore."

New this coming year at Hall High School will also be an addition to the school's foreign language department classes in American Sign Language.

"They'll be not only learning the language, but exploring the American Deaf culture and history," Guidry said.

According to Guidry, there has been a push to include ASL as a foreign language at the school for several years, both at the administrative and student level.

"We have rich resources right here in West Hartford," he said. "You see increasingly in the world that that is considered to be a bonafide foreign language."

The language will be open to students in grades nine through 12 in what Guidry said will be an immersive experience with a new teacher who is part of the deaf community. Close to 50 students have already registered for the course for the coming year.

"The students are clamoring for it," Guidry said.

This offering is especially exciting for Guidry because he said it

opens opportunities for students to learn not just a language but an entire culture to which they may not have been previously exposed.

"The deaf community is a subculture that exists among us in every location. There are other types of subcultures, but most of them tend to be somewhat geographically restricted. The deaf subculture is not," he said. "It's my personal opinion that it's a subculture that flies below the radar, and people often don't think about it as a subculture."

In addition to exposing students to new cultures, other unique classes in the area are aimed at exposing students to new skills. Simsbury High School will be offering a new course this coming year on fashion design.

"We've piloted this in the summer arts program where students are actually making dresses and other clothing, and it's been very successful," Simsbury High School Principal Andrew O'Brien said.

After seeing what he called a "groundswell of interest" from the summer program, O'Brien said the course was further developed as an elective for students at the high school.

"Along with learning the actual fashion design, they get to learn about the industry and the use of different materials," he said.

"For one project, students would choose a celebrity and they would research their style, their body type,



all that, then, ultimately, they created these outfits."

In addition to teaching students about a previously unexplored area, O'Brien said this class also gives them the opportunity to be creative.

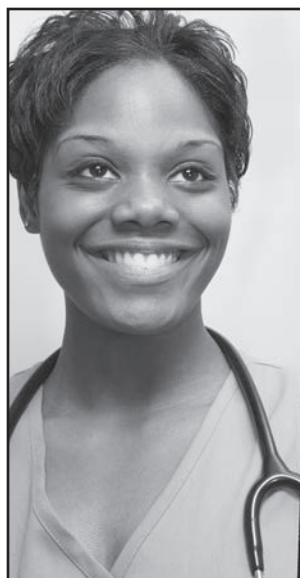
"We had one girl who made an outfit entirely out of Starburst wrappers that were all braided together," he said.

While the summer program primarily focused on women's fashion, the course at the high school will branch into menswear as well.

"It's not only an interesting course for students, but it's a marketable skill as well," O'Brien said.

Providing those marketable skills is a large piece of the push behind courses at Newington High School as well. There, the culinary program has expanded to provide students with real-world kitchen and restaurant experience.

"This is not Home Ec. This is a restaurant atmosphere with catering services," culinary teacher Scott Pestka said. "I teach the kids how



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Back to School

to smoke their own meat. ...That kind of stuff isn't taught in Home Ec."

The program is part of Newington High School's Culinary Arts Academy, which will be entering its third year this fall. The academy offers courses ranging from Introduction to Cooking to Event Planning to Restaurant Management.

In addition to learning in the classroom, students in these courses get hands-on experience in the food service industry, as the class doubles as a catering service for both school members and the community at large.

Students create daily sandwiches and baked goods that are available for teachers and fellow students to buy as well as working a catering event two to three times per month. In the spring, the culinary students catered the State of the Town dinner as well as the high school football team's banquet with more than 150 people.

As the culinary teacher, Pestka runs his classroom like a restaurant kitchen and demands only the highest quality.

"I always tell the kids, we have to sell quality. There will be times where I look at it and it doesn't look perfect, and they'll take them all

apart and redo their chef salad because I wasn't going to sell poor quality," Pestka said. "I'll put my wraps and salads up against

Almeida said.

The school has had a dark room for photography and ensured that the space would not be lost in the

standing photography in general.

"I think our students today are so caught up with modern day technology, with Photoshop and digital media, that I think it's important to understand how black and white film development works," he said.

"Many times we thought of changing it to more of a modern, digital photography, but even the kids will tell you that understanding the black and white photography helps them with their digital work."

Through the class, many students have come to find a passion for traditional photography and shown a great deal of talent in the medium, Almeida said.

"One of the units they do is portraits, and they learn how the right background, the right light, the right shading, all of it makes for a better photo," he said. "It's very different than taking a picture with a digital camera and being able to alter it all after."

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning.

"It's about exposing them to something new," O'Brien said, "and our kids our thriving." **WL**

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning:

"It's about exposing them to something new, and our kids our thriving."

– Andrew O'Brien

anybody any day."

He credits much of the success of the culinary program with the facilities they are able to use, including industrial refrigerators, smokers and ovens.

In Rocky Hill, having the best facilities is possible through a multi-year renovation that has been happening at the high school. One of the most popular classes at Rocky Hill High School is photography.

"We still run it in the traditional sense of the word," Principal Mario

renovation.

"This year, we have a brand new dark room," Almeida said. "When the school was renovating, we decided it was important enough to make sure it was included."

Almeida said photography remains one of the most popular electives and regularly fills up.

Despite changes in technology, Almeida, and many students with whom he has spoken, has said understanding film development at its basic form is crucial to under-

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Back to School

Preparing for a *multicultural* world

Students offered more options when studying world language

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

In an increasingly multicultural world, it's important for students to be given the opportunity to learn another language – or two – at school.

Students are often able to choose from a variety of options, with some districts offering five or more languages.

Simsbury offers classes in Chinese, French, Latin or Spanish. West Hartford currently teaches five and will be adding a sixth – American Sign Language – in the fall.

Newington provides students with a choice between Spanish, Italian and French, with Wethersfield providing the same options.

Glastonbury offers six – Spanish, Russian, French, Chinese, Latin and Greek. Rocky Hill students can learn French, Latin, Italian or Spanish.

Spanish and French remain popular offerings in most districts. Erin Murray, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in Simsbury, said students in her district select a language in seventh grade after they all begin with Spanish in fifth grade.

West Hartford world language coordinators Elena Sada and Lucy Cartland said the popularity of Spanish is evident due to the fact that it is the predominant second language in the United States.

“In West Hartford, like in most regions of the country, Spanish is the most widely-spoken language among bilingual and multilingual populations and is the language of the largest percentage of West Hartford immigrants,” Sada wrote in an email.

Spanish is the most popular language at Newington High School,

according to Rossanna Vassal, coordinator of world language for Newington Public Schools. It is the only language offered in middle school, so most students will continue to study it once they move on to high school. It is the only language in which students will be able to take an Advanced Placement class.

“Many of our students – and parents – will argue that Spanish will be the most useful language to learn,” she said.

Rita Oleksak, director of foreign language for Glastonbury Public

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Schools, said Spanish remains the most popular of the six languages offered "by sheer number of students."

Wethersfield students can start studying a world language beginning in seventh grade. Sally Dastoli, director of curriculum and instruction for Wethersfield Public Schools, said Spanish is what most students opt to take.

Many districts are noticing an increase in the number of students choosing to take French.

"French has slowly crept up on Spanish," Murray said. "Some other

school districts are eliminating those two languages; we have added teachers and sections."

She believes the growing number of students who choose French is due to the fact that a few years ago, Simsbury offered full-year French to seventh-graders, which was not the case for several years prior; they could take a full year only in grade eight.

"It was very difficult for students to change languages between grade seven and eight, and typically made the change when they arrived at SHS," Murray said. "Therefore, with

full year choices made available in grade seven, we are seeing a larger enrollment in French."

Sada and Cartland said French-speaking markets account for five times more business than any other markets, and the largest customer in Connecticut for its products and services is France, followed by Quebec.

"Perhaps our residents are motivated ... by the beauty of French when they choose to study it in our schools," Sada said.

The two most popular languages in Rocky Hill are Spanish and

French, according to Kathleen Lessard, world language supervisor at Rocky Hill High School, with the latter on the rise.

"French enrollment has been increasing steadily in the last few years," she said. "As a French teacher in the district, this is very exciting."

With so many districts offering a wider option of languages, Oleksak said it would make sense for enrollment numbers to go down in a certain language, but she is pleased that "French numbers are holding their own."

Some districts in the state and

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*Some exclusions apply.



Back to School

nationwide discontinued or de-prioritized French programs when adding in the option to take Chinese, but that is not the case in Glastonbury.

Oleksak believes the interest still exists for French because it is spoken in a variety of countries and settings.

The districts that offer Chinese are noticing a growing interest.

In Glastonbury, the number of enrolled students has increased by 20 for the upcoming school year.

Although Chinese sees lower enrollment numbers than other languages in Simsbury, Murray said students often stay until the AP level, giving it a high retention rate.

It will be expanded to the elementary school level via after school programs to give students a taste of the culture and language.

"The perception is that the language is difficult; however, we have strong teachers who attend methods conferences every year," she said. "Chinese teaching is evolving in this

country, and the strategies for teaching a language that is radically different from our own are advancing rapidly."

With so many new options for world language classes, districts are still seeing interest in the ancient languages.

Oleksak said colleagues outside of Glastonbury are impressed upon learning that there are three full-time Latin teachers in the district. West Hartford has a "small but solid demand" among students who want to take Latin or Ancient Greek, often because they wish to pursue a specialization in English or in the medical field.

"Contrary to popular belief, Latin and Ancient Greek are not dead languages; rather, they are the foundation of most common modern languages," Sada said.

"Studies have shown that the study of Latin and Ancient Greek increases English and other world language vocabulary dramatically. ...

Classic languages never die, since they are present in the foundations of all 'modern' languages."

Glastonbury has offered Russian to its students for almost 60 years and is back on an upswing, Oleksak said. It started in 1957, at the time of Sputnik, but she said Russian continues to be a critical need language.

It is offered through a grant from STARTALK, a program funded by the National Security Agency and administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

One of the program's aims is to increase the number of students enrolled in the study of critical-need languages based on national security concerns and global economic competitiveness.

Regardless of what languages are offered in a given district, many are expanding the availability into younger grades or making world language a requirement for graduation.

In Wethersfield, starting with the graduating class of 2020, earning two credits in a world language is now a graduation requirement, Dastoli said.

"We are excited about this new graduation requirement, as the acquisition of a second or third language correlates with a higher academic achievement, benefits the development of different cognitive abilities and helps students develop a more positive attitude towards different cultures," she said.

"Being proficient in a second or third language is an amazing skill for our graduates to use in their future careers."

World language classes are electives at Glastonbury High School, yet 96 percent of the students study at least one language, while 15 percent study two and 10 percent study three.

"It's not important which language you study – it's important that you study a language," Oleksak said. **WL**



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Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne



Wethersfield Farmers Market returns for a seventh year

1. The Wethersfield Farmers Market is back in business every Thursday afternoon on the grounds of the Solomon Welles House at Cove Park. These cherry tomatoes come from Phoenix Farm in Cromwell, growers of certified organic produce. **2.** Andrew Gibson of Connecticut Gourmet in Willimantic is back for another year. Shown are some of the focaccia breads and cinnamon rolls he sells. **3.** Glenn Roth provides live music. **4.** Ed Popadic sorts out product for Pepe's Cream of the Crop, LLC, Shellfish Farm. He often brings four different types of clams: chowder, little neck, cherry and topneck. **5.** Kris Seller and Yeti were on hand one recent week to promote interest in the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. **6.** Spiro Koulouris of the Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre brought his wares on this specially built bicycle/supply cart that he said once ferried items around the plant at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft. **7.** Wethersfield resident Marlene Grower recently started making glass garden items. **8.** Andrew Buccitelli is dressed for the part as he sells products made at Granny's Pie Factory in East Hartford. **9.** Jennifer Smith and Bill Smith Sr. of Jenny's Flowers in East Windsor come to the market to sell flowers and plants. **10.** Jim and Lori Jahoda sell honey, maple syrup, horseradish and more made at Sugar Maple Farms in Lebanon.

Volunteers clean up, plant flowers on Elm Street parcel

A small but dedicated cadre of volunteers took up rakes, pitchforks and other tools to make a portion of the meadows along Elm Street a nicer place.

They gathered at the entrance to a 3.2-acre parcel of land called Frechette Field. Access to the field, which is owned by the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, needed to be cleared, and a nearby pollinator garden was badly in need of a cleanup.

"We lease it to the farmers. It gives us some revenue for our stewardship fund," Jim Woodworth, a vol-

unteer with the trust, said.

Uncontrolled growth was cut down or otherwise removed. In some cases, whole trees had to be taken out.

Areas suitable for flowers were dug up, raked and seeded. The volunteers spread wildflower seeds designed to attract bees and butterflies that will, in turn, pollinate the farm crops.

They also planted blueberry and shad blow shrubs. Among the volunteers were members of local Girl Scout troops and the health class from Silas Deane Middle School. **WL**



Photos by Mark Jahne

A group of volunteers spruced up the entrance to, and area around, Frechette Field along the southern part of Elm Street. They planted flower species known to attract bees and butterflies.



Young volunteers manning rakes and pitchforks included Emily Doten, Liv Hammer, Olivia Kraut and Luke Kraut.



Caryn Doten spreads wildflower seeds on a freshly raked area.



Rick Doran, treasurer of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, cuts away poison ivy branches that are strangling this tree.

People Notes

William Kirsche celebrated his 81st birthday earlier this year. The family patriarch has four children and 11 grandchildren. He is shown surrounded by his 15 great-grandchildren.

Madeline Paine, 9, was chosen to appear as a state finalist in the National American Miss Pageant in

Springfield, Mass. She is representing Southern New England and will compete in the Junior Pre-Teen Division.

More than 20 students in grades 5-8 from Corpus Christi School participated in a festival concert at Central Connecticut State University. They included **Regina**

Miller, Paula Opena, Madelyn Robles, Olivia Stevens, Catherine Cannamela, Shannon McNally, Julia Cannamela, Victoria Esquibies, Lauren Viveiros, Daniel Raymond, Catherine Murphy, Allen Vidallon, Alyssa Pilecki,



William Kirsche



Madeline Paine

Robert Onyina Jr., Dillon Gallo, Michael DelMonaco, Caroline Peak, Reid Paiva, Anthony Satrohan and Brian Satrohan.



Corpus Christi School



Jolie Locke Brown

Jolie Locke Brown was elected as the HARTT College liaison on the University of Hartford Alumni Association Board of Directors.

The GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club recently installed new officers. They are: **Carolyn Brown**, recording secretary; **Pat Mahoney**, president; **Ursula Hunt**, treasurer and **Nora Bassell**, corresponding secretary. Also named officers were **Mary Hannifan**, vice president and **Ursula Casioppo**, parliamentarian. **WL**

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News roundup

Ball turns over funds

1. The first Mayor's Charity Ball raised \$16,000 after expenses and that money was formally presented to the town's food bank the afternoon of June 21. Plans are already under way for the second annual event next year.

The money will be specifically used for a new initiative to feed 88 children in need on the weekends throughout the school year. The Mayor's Charity Ball is working in partnership with the Richard M. Keane Foundation.

School supplies available

The town Department of Social & Youth Services is holding its annual School Supplies Program from 2-5 p.m. Aug. 25 in council chambers at town hall. Only parents or guardians will be allowed to "shop" for children

entering kindergarten through high school.

Families must be Wethersfield residents and must provide a current utility bill in their name to prove residency. Donations will be accepted until Aug. 23. For details call Erica Teixeira or Christina Morra-Tiu at 860-721-2977.

Help for the hungry

The town of Department of Social & Youth Services offers three programs to make sure residents in need have access to food this summer. The food bank in town hall is open to Wethersfield residents who meet certain criteria. Call 860-721-2977 to schedule an appointment.

Mobile Foodshare visits the Wethersfield Housing Authority, 55 Lancaster Road, every other Wednesday from 9-9:30 a.m. This food is free and available to anyone,



bring your own bags. The truck brings fresh fruits and vegetables.

Families who have children in the home and are experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to inquire about the new Weekend Youth Meal Program. A caregiver would be responsible for picking up a bag of food every Thursday or Friday.

These bags will be filled with breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for children to eat on the weekend.

For additional Information, or applications for any of these programs, call 860-721-2977.

Museum establishes board

The National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Connecticut has created the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum board of directors. This new board will over-

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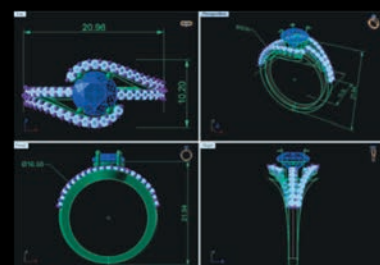
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see the operation of the museum, which is owned by the Colonial Dames.

Members include: Margery Warren, chairwoman; Ann Burton, vice chairwoman; Clare Edwards, Cindy Greenblatt, Eunice Groark, Sally Kernan, Lee Kuckro, Nina Hayes, Douglas Hyland, Tom Miano, Don Peterson, Judy Rowley, Marye Wagner and Dorothy Venter. Charbra Jestin, president of the Colonial Dames, and museum Executive Director Charles Lyle serve in an ex officio capacity.

Veteran donates flag

2. State Rep. Russ Morin hosted Wethersfield resident and World War II veteran Joe Civitillo and his family at the State Capitol recently for a ceremony during which Civitello donated his 296th Engineer Combat Battalion flag to the Connecticut Hall of Flags.

Located in the west wing of the Capitol's first floor, the Hall of Flags displays battle flags of Connecticut regiments from the Civil War through the modern day in oak cases built specifically for the building in 1878.

Civitello served 36 months in the Army's 296th Engineer Combat Battalion in France, Belgium and finally Germany. The battalion was tasked with building replacement bridges across Europe to replace those destroyed by retreating German troops.

MDC awards contract

The Metropolitan District Commission awarded a contract to construct the South Hartford conveyance and storage tunnel to Kenny/Obayashi, a joint venture of two companies with extensive experience in tunnel construction. Kenny/Obayashi was the low bidder for the project at \$279.4 million.

This is the largest contract ever awarded by the MDC, as well as the largest project ever funded by the state's Clean Water Fund. The result will be a four-mile deep rock tunnel designed to temporarily store excess combined waste water and storm water during heavy rain, then convey the flows to the Hartford Water Pollution Control Facility for treatment.

The tunnel's capacity of 41.5 million gallons will help prevent the treatment facility from being overwhelmed during storms, as happened many times in the past. Waste water, including sewage, sometimes backed up into Wethersfield Cove.

The 18-foot diameter tunnel will be built in bedrock approximately 200 feet below ground, effectively eliminating surface disruption during construction. Preliminary work is scheduled to start this fall, with the boring machine scheduled to arrive in the fall of 2017. The tunnel is projected to be in operation by 2023.

Camp Invention is coming

Camp Invention, a summer enrichment day camp program supported by the United States Patent and Trademark Office and a product of the National Inventors Hall of Fame, is coming to Webb School the week of Aug. 1.

Designed for students entering grades 1-6, this camp offers hands-on problem solving using science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The camp provides an opportunity for inventive young minds to exercise their creativity and use their imagination in ways they don't normally get to do in the classroom. For additional information visit campinvention.org. **WL**



LIVING Your Best LIFE



Music warms his heart

David Spicer reflects upon an active, rewarding life

by Mark Jahne
Editor

David Spicer may be 69 years old, but that doesn't mean he's slowing down. Not even a serious illness can sap his joy for life.

Spicer is the longtime minister of music and the arts at the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield. He studied at the Eastern Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and lived in the Midwest before moving to town in October 1986.

"I wanted to work with youth and music," he said.

First Church provides an ideal setting for that because it allows him to do both. A larger church would have required him to pick one or the other, he said.

"When I came here it seemed like the right thing to do. I've grown spiritually, which is the most important thing," Spicer said.

His position allows him to reach out and try different things with his music. It also afforded him the opportunity to play the organ before and after travel programs at the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts until those programs were discontinued.

"I enjoyed that so much," he said. "I've had several high points here."

One of them was the creation of the Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival. Schweitzer is best known as a doctor, missionary, philosopher and Nobel Peace Prize winner, but he

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

was also an accomplished organist.

The festival is open to high school students and young professionals. His hope is to instill in them a love of playing the pipe organ.

"We just finished our 18th year here [at the church] and we have moved it to Trinity College," Spicer said.

The move allows him to do more with the festival and also increases the possibility of sponsorships, he added.

He talks fondly about the reconditioned 1930 Austin pipe organ console that graces the loft in the sanctuary at First Church. Over the years they have added pipe stops and, in a nod to modern technology, digital stops. A "stop" is an organ component that sends pressurized air to a specific set of pipes that then produce the desired sound.

"There is no organ quite like it," he said with a smile.

"Our young people were picked to appear in the Broadway touring company production of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor

Dreamcoat' at the Bushnell," he said.

That was in 1996 and a total of 22 First Church youth participated. Spicer said he is also gratified with the concert series the church sponsors every year, as many as eight performances.

He has no plans to retire as long as his work remains enjoyable and touches people. He delights in his Lionel model trains, but is not a gardener or outdoor type.

"I cut the grass because I have to," he said.

Spicer's reach extends beyond First Church. He teaches music history and appreciation at Tunxis Community College.

"I really like that. I encourage them to bring in the music they like," he said.

He's also the music director of WIHS radio in Middletown, which features a contemporary Christian format. Spicer has his own 30-minute show that can be heard on Sundays. His radio career began this past November.

"I can do what I want to do with that," he said.

He and his wife Dana live in town. She is the owner of Heart of the Country gift shop on Main Street, walking distance from the church.

"We have a blended family, so it's really huge," he said.

In recent months, Spicer has been fighting a battle with cancer. It started in his appendix and cost him part of his colon.

"I had a huge operation at Sloan-Kettering," he said.

He undergoes multi-day chemotherapy treatments but always finds a way to bounce back and refuses to become depressed. He attributes that to his faith and the support he is receiving from family and friends.

"I attribute all the energy I have to people who are praying for me. I can't imagine going through this without that prayer support," he said. "The church had an all-night prayer vigil for me."

Senior Minister/Pastor Deryk Richenbourg volunteered for the 4:30

a.m. slot during that vigil. Spicer is grateful for all of this support and sees his cancer as just another life experience.

"If God thinks I couldn't handle this, he wouldn't give it to me," he said.

Richenbourg praised Spicer for all he means to the church and for his faith and positive attitude.

"David is a man of prayer, always praying for those around him," he said.

He added Spicer can often be found at the church's prayer board, where people post the names of those who could use some divine intervention.

"He is a man who obviously loves music ... has a passion for playing it with kids," Richenbourg said.

He called Spicer dedicated to the church and focused on bringing people together to worship God. He can often be found at the Saturday morning men's breakfasts.

"He won't let sickness get him down," Richenbourg said. **WL**

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Movies about senior citizens

Gumpy Old Men, 1993: Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau
A lifelong feud is worsened when a young woman moves into the neighborhood.

On Golden Pond, 1981: Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn
Couple agrees to take care of their estranged daughter's boyfriend's son.

Driving Miss Daisy, 1989: Morgan Freeman and Jessica Tandy
Story of an older woman and her African-American chauffeur in the American South.

Harold and Maude, 1971: Ruth Gordon

Harold is changed forever when he meets Maude, a lively 70-something.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2011: Judi Dench, Bill Nighy, Maggie Smith and Tom Wilkinson
British retirees head to India to live in a run-down hotel.

Cocoon, 1985, and Cocoon: The Return, 1988

Seniors swim in a pool with alien cocoons, then in the sequel have to decide whether to stay on Earth or return to the place where nobody ages.

The Sunshine Boys, 1975: Walter Matthau and George Burns
Vaudeville duo agree to get back together for a television special and then discover they can't stand each other any more.

Going in Style, 1979: Beau Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg

Three men who need money decide to plan a bank robbery.

About Schmidt, 2002: Jack Nicholson
Newly retired man travels to his estranged daughter's wedding.

Away from Her, 2006: Julie Christie and Michael Murphy
Alzheimer's disease and romantic triangle in a nursing home.

The Bucket List, 2007: Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman
Two terminally ill men head out to fulfill their list of things to do before they die.

Amour, 2012: Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva
Older couple, retired music teachers, find their life changed when the wife has a stroke.

Freezer Geezers, 2009
Documentary about a team competing in the 75 and older division of a hockey tournament.

Is Anybody There?, 2008: Michael Caine

Young boy in England meets a retired magician in the nursing home his parents run.

Ladies in Lavender, 2004: Maggie Smith and Judi Dench

Sisters meet a young mysterious foreigner on the beach in 1930s Cornwall.

Quartet, 2012: Maggie Smith, Tom Courtenay, Pauline Collins and Billy Connolly
Comedy/drama set at a home for retired musicians.

Still Mine, 2013: James Cromwell and Genevieve Bujold
Elderly couple fights to build a home in New Brunswick.

Trip to Bountiful, 1985: Geraldine Page and John Heard
Elderly woman wants to visit her childhood home in Texas



in the 1940s.

Up, 2009: Animated story of 78-year old and a young stowaway.

Young@Heart, 2007: Documentary about a chorus of senior citizens from Massachusetts who cover songs by rockers like Jimi Hendrix. **WL**



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LIVING Your Best LIFE

What advice would you give your 30-year-old self?

LIFE stopped in at area senior centers and asked the question: what advice would you give your 30-year-old self?

"Be active. ... watch your food." Helene Perzaowski, 94, Farmington

"Save more for retirement." Barbara Kaczinski, 61, Bristol

"Take better care of myself." Ken Cooley, 55, Farmington

"Be careful who you marry." Marge Sebastian, Bristol

"Do everything you can when you're young because as you get older, you lose your freedom."

Naoma Campbell, 75, Newington

"Eat healthier." Oma Politz, 68, Avon

"Invest." Russell Tuller, 72, Granby

"Finish college first, start your career and then get on with life, marrying and having kids." Jan Baldinger, Wethersfield

"Know who you're hanging around with." Ray Lampreau, 83, Wethersfield

"I would have invested more money in the stock market – dollar cost averaging into mutual funds. If I did, today I'd be living the life of Riley in Florida." Jim Moura, 80, Wethersfield

"Always have something to do." Bill Glynn, 90, Wethersfield

"Do a good job, but don't be overly ambitious or you'll get picked for the extra work cleaning up other people's messes." Albertine Moura, 78, Wethersfield



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"If you didn't go to college, go back, no matter what it takes, to get that extra training." Julian Radziszewski, 62, New Britain (she was at the Wethersfield Senior Center)

"Be nice to your parents." Barbara Ward, 60+, Glastonbury

"Relax. What's going to happen is going to happen." Phyllis Lombardi, 84, Glastonbury

"Just enjoy it." Kay Carbaugh, 68, Glastonbury

"You don't know everything. Life is a continual learning pro-

cess." Althea Heacock, Glastonbury

"Take life as it comes and don't sweat the small stuff." Gladys Kitchens, 93, Rocky Hill

"Plan ahead financially. You think you're going to have enough, but it runs out." Richard Violette, 75, Rocky Hill

"Stay active." Claire Cirullo, 81, Rocky Hill

"Save money. You don't know what's ahead of you." Helen Salo, 86, Canton

"To do exactly what I did at

that age – and that was to listen to my father's conservative advice, which was to believe in myself, to go to school, have goals." Wanda Colman, 78, Tarriffville

"Work a lot harder. Save more money." Robert Kowalski, 87, Simsbury

"Turn more to seniors for advice." James Diamond, 66, West Hartford

"Be smart. Don't be so quick to rush into things without thinking things through. There are complications that will arise in anything

that you go into in life." Nanci Wylde, 55, West Hartford

"Don't make the same mistakes." Rob Stavnezer, 72, West Hartford

"Don't sweat the small stuff; just let it go. Don't worry about things. If you have your health, you've got everything." Anne Fitzpatrick, 57, West Hartford

"Prepare for the latter years of your life better. Put together a good plan." Jeff Wassell, 68, Hebron (he was at the Glastonbury Senior Center) **WL**

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August calendar

5 **Seniors Celebrate the National Parks**, 11 a.m., Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield St., 860-258-0662

8 **Wethersfield Dollars For Scholars Golf Outing**, Wethersfield Country Club, \$150 per golfer, 860-529-4566 or 860-721-8526

12 **Tifton Carver Worship Band**, CenterPoint Community Church, 7 p.m., 840 Silas Deane Highway, 860-571-8415

13 **Textile Treasures Digging Deeper Tour**, 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m., Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, 211 Main St., 860-529-0612 or webb-deane-stevens.org

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
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Up and running

Groups for all ages share a love of the sport, prepare for events

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Runner and author John Bingham has said of himself, “The miracle isn’t that I finished, it’s that I had the courage to start.”

Running is something that most people can do. While it’s a matter of getting up and moving your legs as fast as you can, there is a lot of mental toughness that goes with it, especially considering that running can be a solitary endeavor.

Sometimes it helps to bring a friend.

Running enthusiasts throughout Greater

Hartford have been producing small miracles of their own by introducing the sport to others and helping them take those first daunting strides. Groups for children and adults are popping up and find their membership growing.

The dominant sound one warm evening was from the feet of a group of runners as they ran laps on an oval track. One by one, they came to the starting line, only to continue on.

The cadence their feet created was occasionally interrupted by a whistle, an indication it was time to slow the pace. The next tweet of the whistle would tell them to speed up.

“I beat my record, I beat my record,” gasped one boy when he finally crossed the finish line. He had just completed eight laps around the track.

Krissy Mok, the whistle wrangler and coach, founded MPower Youth Sports as a way to introduce boys ages 6 to 14 to running. She is a life-long runner and coach for Girls in Stride, a running group that trains young girls to run a 5K (3.1-mile) road race.

Mok, who lives in Farmington, understands that running can provide a sense of confidence, keep people fit and provide some quiet time. She has witnessed the changes it brings to those in her Girls in Stride group.

Taking what she learned from that group, Mok organized a similar group for boys; MPower Youth Sports is now in its third season. It began this past spring, with training to run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K in June. There were two more sessions in preparation for other 5Ks.

Mok has had as many as 30 boys

in her group and noticed that it attracts three different types: athletes who want to stay in shape and build their endurance during their off season, youths who love to run, and “then we have kids – this is the most important sector – kids who want to do a sport, but don’t feel confident to do a team sport.”

The coach creates an environment where the boys do not compete with one another. Mok hopes all her runners improve over time and have fun.

Alex Wang, 14, said he decided to join because basketball season had ended.

“It’s very fun,” he said. “It’s straightforward. You don’t focus on a tactic. I let my mind run a lot.”

Zach Halstead agreed.

“It’s a good thing to relax and get away from your life for a while.”

When the session first begins, runners start slowly and understand it is OK to walk at first. Eventually they will alternate between walking and running until the time comes when they will run the



Students at the five Wethersfield elementary schools have an opportunity to join the Keane Foundation Running Club. The idea is to get outdoors, get some exercise and run a 5K, or 3.1-mile, road race.

entire distance.

Mok has an assistant volunteer coach, Andrew Miller, and several parents – inspired by what their sons are doing – who come to practice and run, too.

“Race day is amazing, it’s such a special day,” she said.

The boys encourage one another all along the route and most stay at the end of the race until the last one crosses the finish line. During the June race, MPower Youth Sports runners wore orange T-shirts as a way to distinguish themselves from others.

Runner Lisa Pillow of West Hartford co-founded Girls in Stride with Glenn Marcella in 2010 and recently expanded the running group to Farmington, Newington and Glastonbury. It trains girls ages 6 to 14 to run a 5K. In the spring, the girls run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K and a second session in the fall runs a winter race.

“Initially, we thought of exposing girls to running and we’d reach out to those who may not play a team sport,” Pillow said. “We have also reached other girls who play a sport, to build endurance.”

Each week the girls meet and run laps as coaches guide them through running concepts, such as pacing and form.

“They really benefit from doing their running together,” Pillow said.

The girls also work to meet other people in the group and often will have “homework” to do after practice, such as trying to eat one more vegetable or piece of fruit. They benefit from having the support and encouragement of others in the group.

“We really honor that and try to teach the girls to be supportive of

“We want girls to realize that running is fun. It’s empowering. We want to set them on a path of a lifetime of fitness.”

Caitlin Cunningham

each other and help them through the practice,” Pillow said.

Prior to the race, she and her coaches create a mock race so the runners, especially those new to the event, can gain an understanding of what race day will be like.

“Running was something that I just loved, even in high school,” Pillow said. “I’d get up and run before school. It’s just a way to clear my head and get ready for the day and it makes you feel good.”

Caitlin Cunningham was introduced to Pillow and Girls in Stride while she worked at Fleet Feet in West Hartford. She had an interest in starting a running group for girls, so when she heard what Pillow had done and that Newington was interested in starting such a group, she began one that practices at Mill Pond Park.

Cunningham, who lives in Simsbury, is now in her fourth season of coaching a Girls in Stride group.

“It’s fun,” she said.

She also appreciates the support that the other Girls in Stride groups give one another. Coaches will often reach out to others to get ideas and share information about what the each group is doing.

More members have joined

Newington Girls in Stride since its inception and, like its neighboring group in West Hartford, they also ran the Celebrate race.

“In a lot of sports, running can be a punishment. We want girls to realize that running is fun. It’s empowering. We want to set them on a path of a lifetime of fitness,” Cunningham said.

“A lot of parents ask us, ‘Can my daughter really run a 5K?’ Yes, they can; they train for it,” she said, adding that some of the mothers have decided to train for the race, too.

Having a group environment to get started is beneficial.

“Running can seem pretty challenging. It’s you and your own mind, but if you have a buddy you can talk to while you are doing it, that helps with pacing,” Cunningham said.

“I think running helps a lot with goal setting. You can set short-term goals, long-term goals – what you want to accomplish, even if it’s just running two times a week.”

In Wethersfield, young people are also running.

Barbara Bellas was instrumental in founding the Keane Foundation Running Club after having a conversation with the director of parks and recreation

and the Central Connecticut Health District about childhood obesity.

The obesity issue in town is no more or less than the national average, Bellas said, but she long had an interest in starting a running group for children and this news seemed like a compelling reason to get it up and literally running.

Parks and Recreation assisted with the administrative side of things and the health district provided a grant. Bellas, a runner herself, reached out for volunteers from each of the town’s five public elementary schools.

Each school now offers a six-week program to train for a 5K. The spring session prepares for the Keane Foundation 5K and the fall session trains for the Mikey’s Place 5K, a race Bellas was instrumental in establishing.

“We build up to a 5K,” she said. “A lot of kids can’t run a 5K in six weeks, but we are OK with a jog-walk. We want to encourage them to build on whatever they have.”

Runners are encouraged to set goals for themselves and it can be something as simple as running the length of the field where training sessions take place, or counting to 20 as you run before you stop and walk, or running to the next tree.

“We try to make it fun,” Bellas said.

The program draws students who have never run before as well as those who already participate in sports.

“I really like when it’s the non-athletic kids, when this is all they are getting,” she said. “It gives them a sense of accomplishment, success.”

This spring 233 students participated in the program. **WL**



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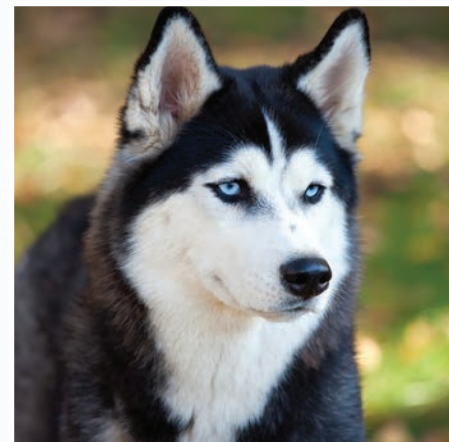
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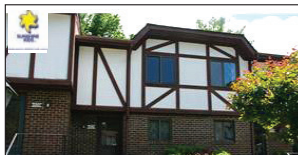
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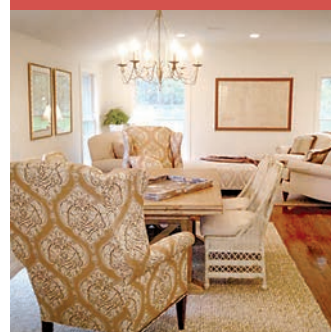
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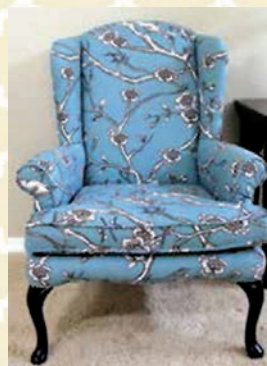
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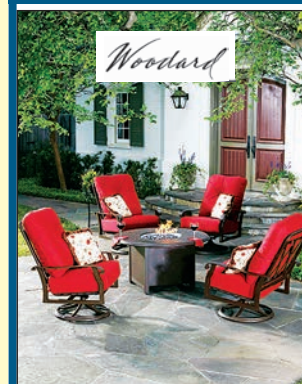
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Editorial

Why is it so hard to accept differences?

We read every day, or see on TV or the Internet, about violence perpetrated around the world by members of one group against members of another.

The differences may be racial, national, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or others. Fear of those who are in some way different sparks some people to commit acts of violence, others to take on bigoted attitudes, still others simply avoid those who seem different.

Why is there so much mistrust? Why is there so much fear? Why is it so easy for people to dislike or distrust an entire group of human beings?

The answers are not simple. These problems and attitudes have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Humans tend to be tribal, whether that tribe is based upon race, ethnicity, nationality or faith. There is a tendency to interact with those who are most like us because they make us feel good about who we are.

Americans can't deal in a civil manner with our politics. We pick a side, a philosophy, and then refuse to listen to any other ideas or opinions. Those "other" people, be they liberals or conservatives, clearly don't have a clue. They can't be patriotic Americans because they hold different views than we do.

So we shout them down, shut them out, insult them and proclaim they are the spawn of the devil. They're not. They're just fellow citizens who have a different outlook. We need to turn off the emotion and turn up the civility.

When Justin Trudeau was elected prime minister of Canada this past year, he used part of his acceptance speech to encourage his followers to treat members of the opposition party like neighbors, not enemies. He deserves credit for making such a unifying statement.

Can you imagine Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton doing that? It's not even likely to happen at the local level in an election for mayor or a seat on the school board.

Look at all the richness of life that can be gleaned by learning about and accepting people who are different in one or more ways. Reaching out to them and spending a little time with them can eliminate the fear, break down the barriers, and enable us to better understand them.

The more you know someone, the less threatened you feel around them. You come to realize that they share many of the same values you have, like loving their children and striving to live a good life.

Yet we continue to fall back on old habits, old stereotypes and old fears. Why? Perhaps because it's easy. Breaking down those stereotypes and beliefs is much harder. But it's worth the effort.

Letters

Responds to letter about community center weeds

To the Editor:

As the director of the Wethersfield Beautification Trust, I was naturally drawn to the letter published in last month's Wethersfield Life entitled "What a Mess."

Let me state from the outset that the WBT plays no role in the maintenance of the garden areas of the Pitkin Community Center. However, after reading the author's scathing description of the "feeble attempt at adding plants" to the two cement planters made by the WBT volunteers, I feel compelled to comment.

The WBT has existed since 1996. During that time we have contributed time, work and funds to beautify the public spaces of the town in myriad ways, most obviously, though not solely, through gardening projects.

We are a nonprofit organization separate from the town and receive no town funding, but are ably and graciously assisted by the Physical Services Department when necessary. We use our own funds, yearly contributions by generous private and commercial donors, and the unflagging efforts of our volunteers to further our mission.

We welcome newcomers to both groups.

The cement planters at the entrance to the community center are owned by the WBT and have been planted and maintained by one such volunteer for many years. On her behalf, and that of the other volunteers who have cared for more than 60 planters and 20 gardens for two decades in this town, I must ask only one question:

How feeble is that?

Margaret Sacks

wethersfield LIFE

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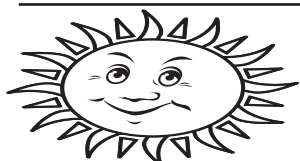
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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

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This summer, and going forward you may notice a higher frequency of “Air Quality” Alerts here in Connecticut – and there is a reason why. It is not because the quality of air is any worse, it has to do with a change in the criteria (the threshold) used to issue the alert, by the EPA. [NL](#)



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